

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 25, 2004

The Honorable Colin L. Powell
Secretary
Department of State
Harry S. Truman Building 2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Powell:

Recent reports regarding treatment of many Hmong families in Laos are causing great concern among our constituents. We are asking your assistance to help address and investigate allegations of continued aggression and abuse against Hmong people living in and leaving the jungles of Laos.

As you know, we represent large Lao-Hmong communities in Wisconsin and have closely followed the human rights situation in Laos. Many of our Hmong constituents fought with the Central Intelligence Agency during the Vietnam War to rescue downed American pilots, to thwart supply lines, and to hold off North Vietnamese troops. Many still have family and friends in Laos, and reports they receive from contacts in Laos allege the capture and murder of Hmong men, women, and children by the Lao government.

In particular, recent press reports stating that many Hmong families are coming out of the jungles and "surrendering" to Lao authorities differ strongly from reports brought to our attention by some of our constituents that the Lao government is in fact stepping up efforts to kill and capture Hmong people living in the jungles. They also report that Lao government officials are taking some of the Hmong who are leaving the jungles, especially heads of families, into custody.

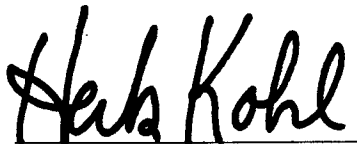
We understand that the Lao government limits access to certain provinces and areas where many of these alleged activities are taking place. We encourage the State Department's continued efforts to have the Lao government grant broad access into these areas for U.S. officials, UN representatives, and nongovernmental organizations to observe the treatment of the Hmong in and coming out of the jungles of Laos. Further, it is important that the State Department push for access to any Hmong taken into custody by Lao officials during this reported "surrendering" to determine humanitarian conditions and treatment.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please contact us if you have any questions.

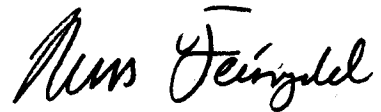
Sincerely,



Ron Kind
Member of Congress



Herb Kohl
U.S. Senator



Russ Feingold
U.S. Senator